Darker Than a Skyful of Ravens

Estonian Black Metal

1990-1999

Nikolas Sild

Darker than a Skyful of Ravens

A book archiving Estonian Black Metal until 2000.
Written in
2024-2025
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Foreword

I decided to make this book, since the internet can only keep so much and it's always a good idea to archive things in physical format. And although there have been some books archiving the Estonian metal scene of the 1990s, there hasn't been one focused on only black metal.

The order is chronological, not date specific though, it is year specific. The bands of that year are ordered randomly, because a lot of bands don't have an exact founding date.

So, let's look into something that is darker than a skyful of ravens…

I

Kurat

KURAT

Credits to Veiko Rebane with his book “Death Metal In Estonia (1989-1995)” and Carl Frey for info

The first Estonian black metal project, founded in 1992 by Carl Frey. In 1992, he recorded a two track demo and only made one cassette of it, which unfortunately got lost and hasn't been found yet.

He made the demo in his bedroom with his guitar, cassette recorder and computer, where he used FastTracker to program drums. He recorded the first guitar on a tape, then he recorded everything: the first guitar playing from the tape, programmed drums from the computer and playing the 2nd guitar at the same time. Although the demo is still lost, Carl rerecorded the tracks from memory about 5 years ago. Their recording quality of course is different, but the song structure and melody is pretty similar to the original.

The two tracks are heavily influenced by Burzum and atmospheric, one track is eight minutes while the second one is three, the second one is more dissonant and experimental, while the first one is more traditional, atmospheric bm with slow and fast parts, something like “A Lost Forgotten Sad Spirit” by Burzum.

The songwriting of Kurat was different from other black metal bands at that time, since Carl used power chords as little as possible and played with more than three strings.
His main influences at that time, besides Burzum, were Mayhem, Master's Hammer, Darkthrone, Emperor and Abysmal, but he was also inspired by classical music, like Bach and Vivaldi.
How the only release of Kurat was lost is a pretty interesting story. Carl met a black metal guy in “Zavood” and told him that he had founded the first Estonian black metal band, he wasn't that much interested, but they agreed that Carl would leave him the tape at the “Tsink Plekk Pang” restaurant, which was the only tape of that record. He left the tape there, and after that no one knows what happened to the cassette. A sad case, but at least no one took away the memory of the tape from Carl and the others he played it to.

Logos of Kurat that Carl used for Veiko's book; he didn't use them for the tape, but they still look good and are made by him.

II

The Grey Calamity

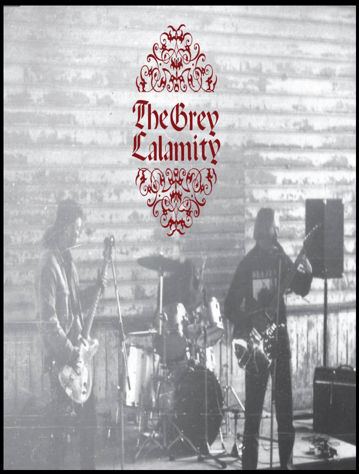
Credits to Veiko Rebane and Tanel Langer for info

Founded on the 13th of January in 1993, although they were under the name “Spawngrip” for a bit in 1993 and played death metal, being influenced by Carcass, Incantation and other death metal bands. But in the summer of that year in Hiiumaa, they changed the band's name and turned to black metal. The band consisted of Veiko Rebane, guitarist and vocalist, W. Gates on drums, vocals and guitars, and Tanel Langer on bass, but in the beginning there were some other members too for a short time. The Grey Calamity and other bands were really helped by Estonian secondary school band rooms, although they had cheap and minimal recording equipment, it wasn't a big issue since most people couldn't afford musical equipment themselves. Hell, the band's first guitarist made a guitar himself out of his parents' kitchen table and it sounded normal. Funnily enough, although Veiko had heard some Bathory albums, the black metal sound didn't click with him, so he thought that Spawngrip will always be a death metal band.

But after getting bored of death metal and discovering bands like Darkthrone and Burzum, hearing how unique and fresh they were compared to 90s death metal, the band turned to black metal. At that time black metal releases were limited but people still got them through people they know and tape trading, most releases actually came first in Tartu, where most of the contact with Norway and other countries was. After doing some rehearsals, in December 1994 their more official releases started, with the demo “Between the Decline and Dawn”.

This demo was heavily influenced by Darkthrone and Burzum(especially Veikos vocals which were heavily influenced by Varg). Recorded in the “Mai” studio of Pärnu, this demo offers a good dose of pure, raw black metal. Primitive, but also having some atmospheric and calmer parts.

The demo had some issues with releasing though, they had some tape copies made but they weren't with a cover art since at that time getting a cover art for a release was pretty hard, the main reason being that only a few people had computers. But after 6 months passed, they got a cover art, although at that time they were not really focused on this demo and shared only a few tapes with the album cover. In January 1994 they also performed live, although most songs they played were pure death metal, there were black metal elements. They also made a rehearsal tape in January 1995, which also was pretty damn good. Still influenced by Burzum and Darkthrone, but now by the Darkthrone “Panzerfaust” album too, with some songs taking a more slower, atmospheric sound.

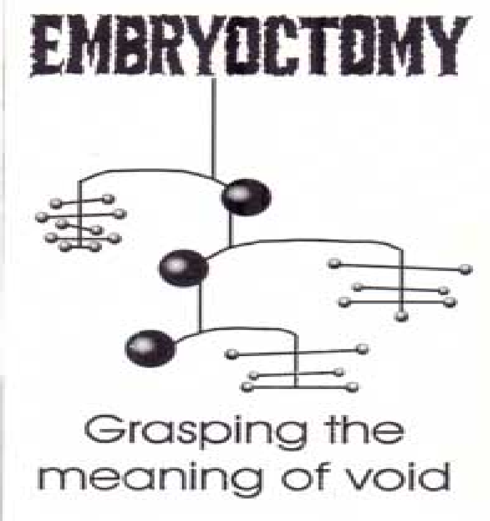


1995 was the best year for The Grey Calamity, they played 5 gigs and also recorded two rehearsals.
But at the end of that year Langer and Veljo got conscripted into the military, Veljo in the beginning of July and Langer in October, so the band went on hold until October 1996, but when they reunited, rehearsing just wasn't the same anymore. Veiko started liking black metal less and listening more to other music, almost the same way he got bored of death metal cause too many bands were starting to sound the same, and started conversing less with his bandmates, so around December 1996 Langer and Värava started considering kicking Veiko out, an idea that sadly came to reality. He got kicked out in the band in February of 1997 and slowly left the metal scene, but fortunately he returned again after again listening to the Carcass "Necroticism - Descanting the Insalubrious" album and his other favorite metal releases. But Langer and Värava carried on for a bit, performing at Baltic Thunder in September 1998(their only live after 1995) and releasing the demo in 1999 "Wooden Crosses"(no cover art).
Recorded in the end of 1998 and in the beginning 1999 Veljo did some fine tuning of the tape, after that it was fit for release.
Now Värava does vocals, drums and guitars and Langer still does bass. The vocal style has changed a bit, with it being more akin to the classic Norwegian BM vocals, not the Burzum inspired type of vocal style. But everything else is keeping the flame alive that the first demo made, ravishing and raw.
But the end was near, on the 21st of September in 1999 The Grey Calamity disbanded.

III

Embyroctomy/Winter Night Overture

Both bands were spearheaded by Sergei Velugin, it is mostly thought that these two are the same band, just different names. Let's start with Embyroctomy, founded in 1993. The lineup was Denis Dubotsev on bass, Alex Vedernikov on drums, Anton Novopolitsev on guitars and Sergei Belugin on guitars/vocals. They released only one demo, an 15 minute blackened thrash metal onslaught called “Grasping the Meaning of Void”.

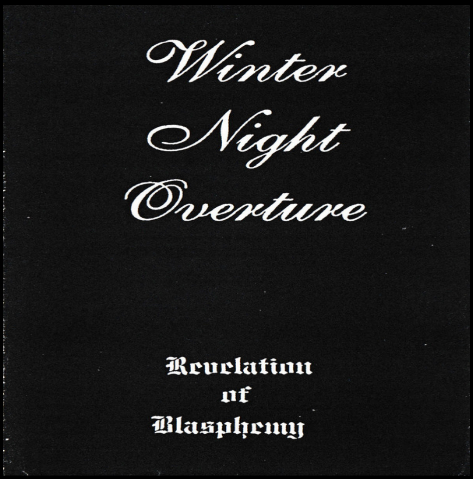


Released in 1994, although mostly thrash metal, the vocals are defiently akin to black metal and so are some of the riffs and drumming.

The songwriting is varied, going from slow, atmospheric riffs to straight fast guitar massacre. Some death metal influence can be found as well. Although called a demo, it's almost like an EP because the songs are pretty professionally written and recorded.

Now moving onto Winter Night Overture.

Recruiting some new members like Valery(drums), Stas(vocals/lyrics) and Erik(guitar), Sergei moved into the black metal sound completely, starting with the 1995 demo “Revelation of Blasphemy”.

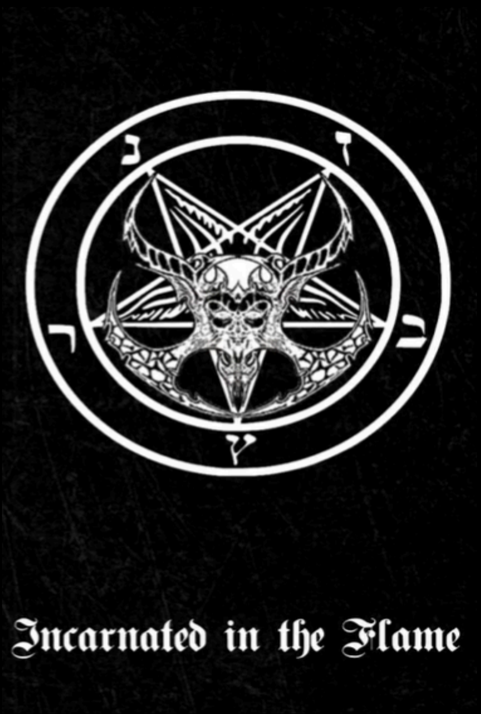


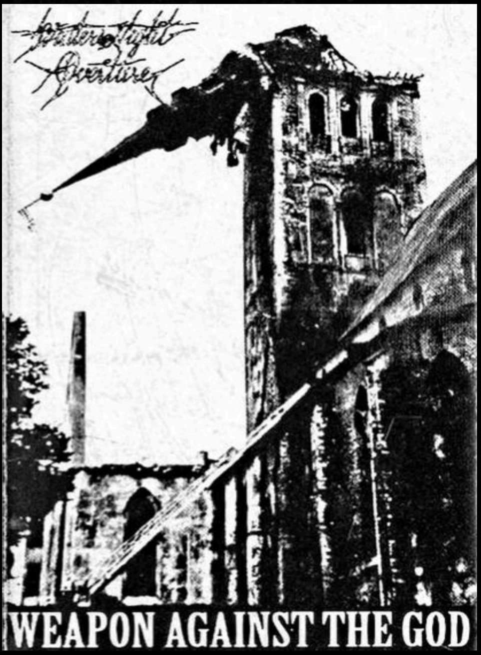
The demo was recorded in the summer of 1995 in a 12-track studio with the help of Alex Vedernikov.

“Revelation of Blasphemy” was spread not only to the scenes of Estonia, but other countries as well, where it received positive reception.

Definitely influenced by Burzum and bands similar to it, this demo has as much bitter and aggressive guitar riffs as it has melancholic and atmosphere filled parts. It even has some nice keyboard sections, played by session musician E. Gubin. Varied songwriting throughout id say.

In 1996, they released the “Incarnated in Flame” demo.





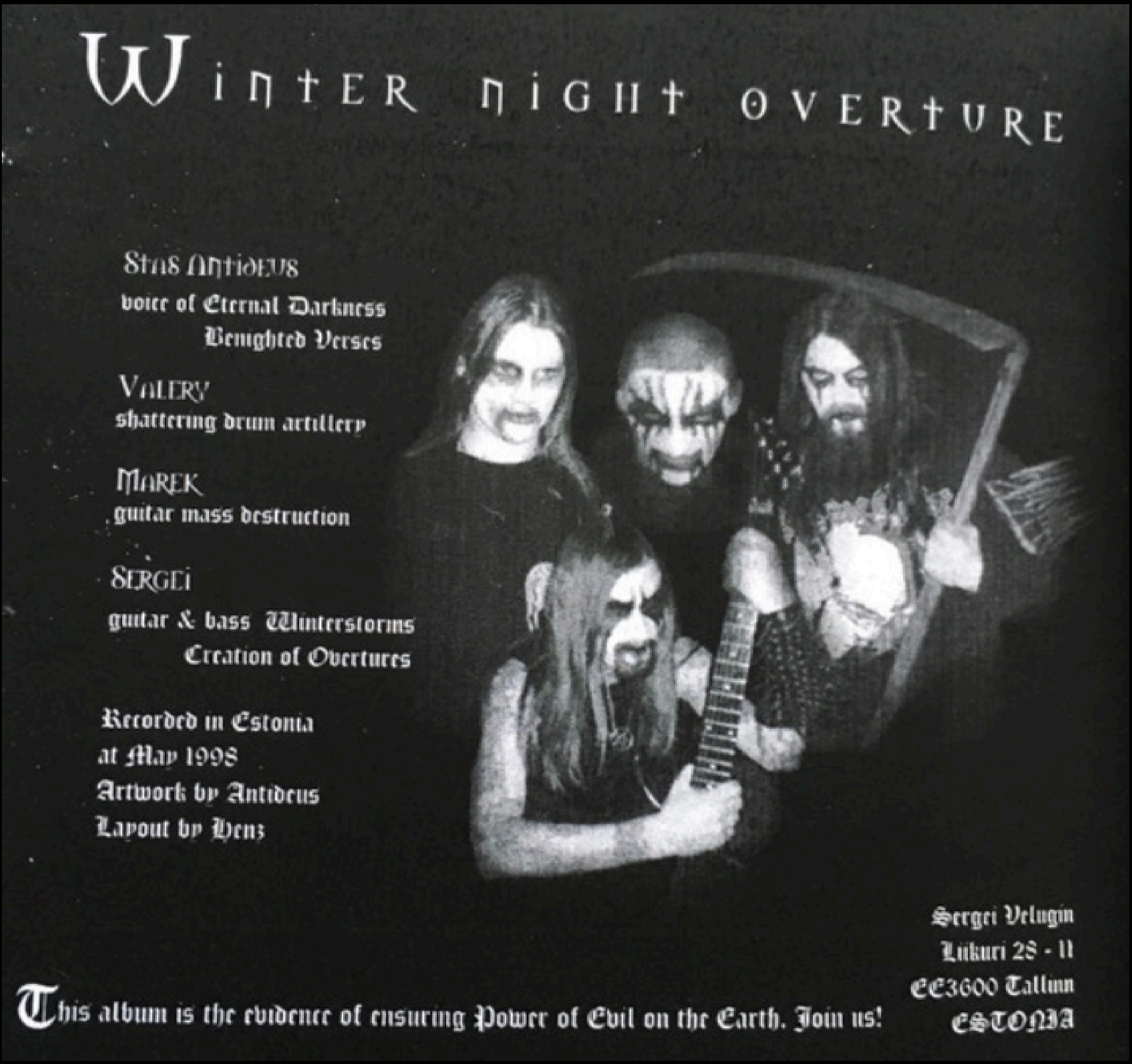
Recorded at the Linnahall studio with a 24-track recorder, it still has a bit more raw of a sound quality, and the Burzum influence is shining even more brightly, but definitely not in a ripoff way. The songs really remind of the first two Burzum albums, especially the more aggressive and fast parts.

But the songwriting is still really varied, it now even has some melodic/heavy metal parts and a few doomy parts too. One track is completely ambient too, played by guest musician A. Orlov, who played keyboards throughout this whole demo.

They also did some gigs in Tallinn at this time.

But now let's talk about their only album and last non-compilation release, published in 1998: “Weapon Against the God”.

Still as raw, hell maybe even rawer as their previous releases, but with a different sound.
Now it is much more triumphant and sometimes even catchy, but raw as hell. Some songs have a really aggressive old school black metal sound though, sounding like Bathory on their "The Return…" album, those songs are the most aggressive and crushing Winter Night Overture has been.
Well, that is sadly all of their releases in the 1990s, but they sure made 3 really solid records.



WINTER NIGHT OVERTURE

Stas Antideus
voice of Eternal Darkness
Benighted Verses

Valery
shattering drum artillery

Marek
guitar mass destruction

Sergei
guitar & bass Winterstorms
Creation of Overtures

Recorded in Estonia
at May 1998
Artwork by Antideus
Layout by Henz

Sergei Velugin
Lukuri 28 - 11
EE3600 Tallinn
ESTONIA

This album is the evidence of ensuring Power of Evil on the Earth. Join us!

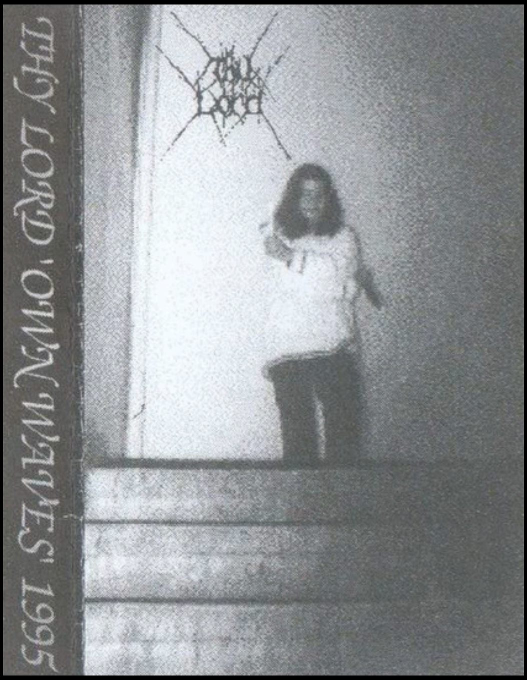
IV

Thy Lord

Credits to Veljo Värava for info

Founded in 1994 by W. Gates(Veljo Värava) on vocals/guitars/drums and Aivar Tagasaar on bass/vocals, to make music that combines black metal with doom metal. Veljo was more into black metal, Aivar was more into doom.

In 1994 they released their first demo, named “Those Who Cross the Unlight”.



After that, they released an another demo in 1995 called “Own Waves”. Though surely in the vein of black metal, especially reminding me of Bathory’s “The Return…” album, the record is filled with experimental parts you rarely get from your typical bm bands. For example the noisy intro or the really calm, doomy clean guitars throughout the whole record that are as frequent as the usual distorted tremolo picked riffs.

The track Hemlock is also really interesting, having a tempo that is much more slower than regular BM because of their intent to play black doom, but also having ominous keyboard melodies and vocals that sound like they are coming from a deep cave. In conclusion, a tape that is unique and has a raw, strong spirit, going against the grain.

In 96' Aivar left the band, but Veljo still carried on, releasing the demo named "1997" promo, then in 98 the demo "Möh?!" and in the same year doing a track for the "Unto a Long Glory… vol 2.", named "Mardus"(Anger).

Thy Lord was influenced by a variety of bands. Veljo was influenced by mostly black metal, both the traditional(Burzum, Darkthrone) and the avant-garde side(Fleurety, the first Katatonia album). Beyond Dawn, Carpathian Fullmoon and Unanimated were also pretty significant influences to him. To Veljo, a lot of the Norwegian well known second wave bands did not interest him that much. Aivar was more influenced by the melodic strain of death doom: My Dying Bride, Anathema, Pyogenesis.

Thy Lord carries on as a project of Veljo, where he experiments with different styles of metal, hence why now it is dubbed experimental metal in Metal Archives.

V

Tharapita

Credits to Ank for info

Tharapita was founded in 1995, although they were under a different name during 1993-1995: Ancestral Damnation. At this time it was the solo project of Ank(Ants Lill), for it he only recorded guitars and vocals, recording at his home. Under this name he did not release anything publicly, but had a demo planned named “Bestial Profanation”. During that time his influences were Burzum, Beherit, Rotting Christ, Impaled Nazarene, Enslaved, Emperor and other similar bands.

Then the style of the project started changing, going into more of a pagan and epic direction and deviating from the raw black metal he originally wanted to make. He had also recruited some band members, and after starting to rehearse with them in March 1995, Ank changed the name to Tharapita and released a demo in 1995 called “Must Viirastus”(Black Phantom). Recorded in August/September of 1995, the lineup included A.X(Aivar Vood) on drums, Ank on vocals/guitars, Massacra(Kalev Lubbi) on backing vocals and he also recorded the tape. Fun fact, this record had no bass guitarist.

This Demo might very well be the birth of Estonian Pagan Black Metal. The riffs are much more folk music inspired than the Estonian BM releases before it and it focuses much more on paganism lyrically too.

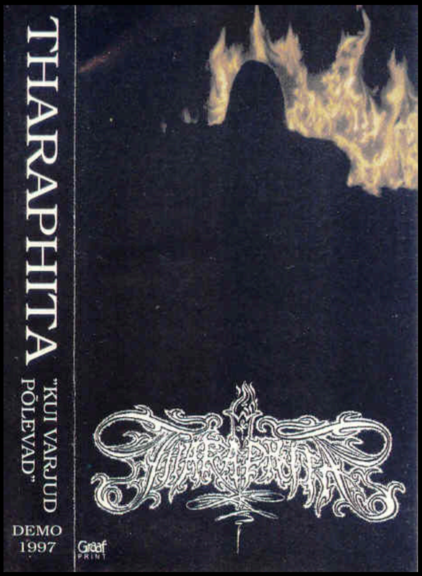
Some clean, less distorted folkish instrumental parts are also here, but this being a rehearsal, it's still really raw.

In 18.05.1996 Tharapita also performed for the first time live, at Club Piraat, Tallinn.

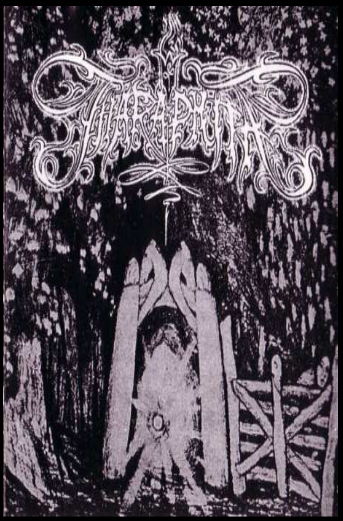
In 1996 they released another demo, “Kui Varjud Põlevad”(When Shadows Burn). With a lineup consisting of Ank(Ants Lill) on guitars, vocals and lyrics, Massacra(Kalev Lubbi) on bass and A.X on drums.

The demo was recorded in Linnahall, and at night, since it was much cheaper to use the equipment of that studio at night.

On this record they made their sound much more solid and songs more developed, but retained their rawness, creating a really solid demo. It has a really unique sound, although their influences can be clearly heard: Burzum and Bathory(Viking Era mostly), but they also put Estonian folk melodies and instruments into the songs and the lyrics are really unique too, Estonian paganism/folk based: some talking about uprisings of Estonian slaves, others about mythological creatures like Merekurat(Sea Devil) and nature worship.



Then they also released a promo tape in 1997, with a changed lineup(same lineup as the album one, but the drummer on



here is still A.X), recorded in Massacra studio on the 25th of October and made less than ten tapes for it.

Now moving onto their first album and last release of the 1990s, released in 1998, named "Raev"(Rage).

Now the lineup consists of Ank(Vocals, Lyrics, Guitars), Massacra(Bass), Draconic(Kaido Haavandi)(keyboards, backing vocals), Melu(Drums), Lembetu Madrus(Ahto Lembit-Lehtmets)(Guitars, backing vocals).

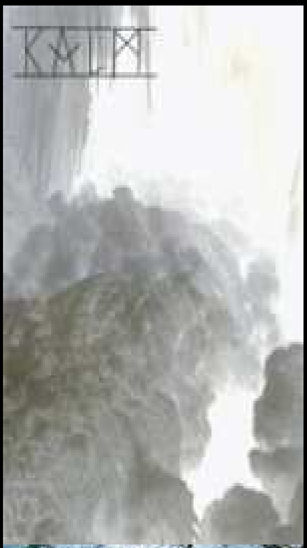
Although 3 of the 6 songs are the same songs from the previous demo, they are rerecorded and sound pretty different from their demo versions. The 3 new songs are really well done too, the sound is still the same, but now more melodic and keyboard driven. The album was mostly written by Ank, Massacra and A.X, but Lembetu wrote a passage for the title track. Draconic made synth passages, adding more atmosphere to the songs. This record had a lot of influences from different metal genres, for example Ank noted that the song "Sündinud tules" was influenced by Bathory, Manowar and Rotting Christ, "Allpool lund ja jääd" by Dio, Accept, Burzum, Rotting Christ and Manowar, "Tumedam kui taevas täis ronki"(Darker Than a Skyful of Ravens) by the Celtic Frost record "Into the Pandemonium" and the first album by Ulver. The main riff of "Merekurat" was inspired by Saint Vitus.

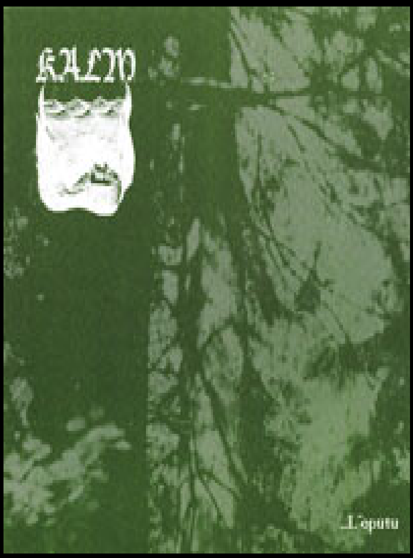
The album was well received across the Baltics, and they performed at Baltic Thunder 1998.

VI

Kalm

Founded in 1995, headed by Alan Rahumeel(Kalm). They started releasing music right away, in 1995 releasing the “Kättemaks huntidele”(Revenge to the Wolves)(top picture) demo and the “Org”(Valley)(bottom picture) demo. Sadly, I couldn't find any info about them except the cover art and release date, so enjoy that and let's talk about the demo that I gave a listen to(right picture), named “...Lõputu”(...Endless). This record's lineup was Alan Rahumeel on vocals, lyrics and guitars, and Eku on drums. Sound was engineered by Keljo Koppel.





Varied songwriting, definitely influenced by Burzum, pagan lyrics but the music itself is not pagan black metal: it's sometimes a really aggressive form of black metal with an ear blasting drum sound(in a good way), but then you also have these slow ambient parts that remind me of the Burzum “Hlidskjalf” album, and then it's sometimes a slow/mid-tempo atmospheric black metal sound similar to a Burzum record like “Filosofem” or “Hvis Lyset Tar Oss”. Some symphonic black metal and Bathory influence I can hear too. There's even a really cool heavy metal bit in the middle of the title track! The recording quality is just the borderline of rawness where you can understand what is happening, but it's still unforgivingly harsh. After this demo they released a short 7 minute demo called “Vaenu verest värvitud”(Colored with the Blood of Rage), and then a 6 minute single called “Üksinduse kuningas”(King of Loneliness). Sadly I couldn't find either the physical copies or digital files of these releases, but I used the “Vaenu verest värvitud” cover as a display of their logo in the beginning of this chapter and the “Üksinduse Kuningas” single does not have a cover.

But sadly, just after the 1990s ended, Kalm disbanded because of the untimely passing of the frontman. R.I.P Alan Rahumeel.

VII

Deilegium

Credits to Deniss Shelepov for info

BLASPHEMOUS
CONFESSION

Melodic Black Metal founded in the autumn of 1995, they released their first demo “Blasphemous Confession” in 1996, with the lineup of Dmitry Potekhin on bass, Denis Shelepov on drums/keyboards, Andrey Kazakov on guitars, Igor Ananyev on guitars and Vadim Orlov on vocals.

They're the first band in Estonia to mix black metal with heavy metal and a bit even with death metal, and they did all of those styles justice. The demo is still really raw and the vocals are pure black metal without a doubt, but the riffs remind me of early In Flames and Iron Maiden, some great guitar duels on this record. Drums of this demo were electronic and at first played live, then processed by rhythm machine. Even some clean vocals are present and the intro is completely ravaging dark ambient.

The release was not really spread around, only to some metal fans in Finland and Estonia.
But in 1996 they advanced their style, with the album “Long Ago…”.
The lineup is the same, but now Nastja also did backing vocals and piano as a guest, and performed live with them once.
Now they have gone more into the pure black metal direction, but still melodeath parts can be found. Also keyboards now play a role and the overall focus on the music is atmosphere, rather than melodies. Still some heavy metal riffs and guitar battles can be found, which make the instrumental really memorable. The studio gear of this record was top notch, great drums and they even recorded real organ and piano segments.
Members of Deilegium listened to a lot of different bands and styles of music, but the main focus was still metal. For his influences Deniss mentioned bands like S.O.D., Misfits, Napalm Death, Deicide and Sepultura but also Old Man's Child, Dimmu Borgir, Burzum, Mayhem, and even ABBA and Nirvana.
After this demo they disbanded, some like Dmitri went to play in other bands like Grom, some left metal music completely.
Deilegium also recorded some rehearsals besides these 2 demos and performed live three times. About the rehearsal gear, Deniss noted: “Some old Riga drums, cymbals that we could afford, nothing special. The bass was probably Czech, and the two guitars were homemade. There was a very good guitar master in Tallinn. Our amps were Soviet or Czech, Vermona, I think. The distortion effect was definitely Rat and a homemade pedal from the second guitarist.”

VIII
Ancient Hatred

Ancient Hatred

Founded in 1995, consisting of two members whose identities are unknown, Soldier(Drums/Vocals) and Lord of Hate(Vocals/Guitar/Bass). The first and one of the two Estonian black metal bands to base their lyrics on national socialism to this day(along with Lord Of Hate). For now their 1990s records are nowhere to be found, neither sold or available to be digitally listened to.

The band started with the demo “Aryan” in 1996, and then after a year released a self-titled demo, and an EP called “A New Horizon”. Even their full-length album “Make Them Suffer” released in 1999 is nowhere to be found.

The existence of this band is a bit dubious, since the identity of the members has never been revealed, so it is not completely clear if they were based in Estonia. The number of CDs made for the bands releases on sites like Encyclopedia Metallum is also strange, with the band making 1000 copies for their EP, a really unheard quantity of CDs for an underground Estonian BM band.

IX
Pirit

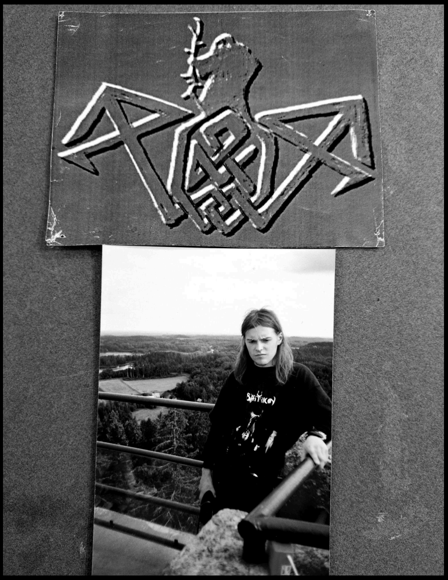
Credits to Markku Kivine(Mantas) for info

Unholy black metal founded in 1995 by Mantas(Markku Kivine). It all started when Mantas had read the stories of the Estonian writer Juhan Jaik, who is regarded as an Estonian equivalent to J.R.R. Tolkien. From his ideas he was inspired to create the track "Laanevana"(Forest Elder). Though after rearranging and playing the riffs over a hundred times, the riffs lost their melodic and rhythmic logic, descending in quality day by day and almost becoming plain absurdities.

So, in 96' Mantas decided it was time to get some company for the project. The first rehearsal was held in Türi, with Lembetu from Loits on bass and Lauri Pajos from C.C.C. on drums. They rehearsed the freshly written "Laanevana" track. The instrumental of the song was supposed to sound or at least reflect folk/pagan themes, but sadly it did not, since the music itself suffered from discord and riffs that were too psychedelic for their own good.

The next rehearsal was done in 97' with another song, this time with Massaca from the band Tharapita playing drums and Lembetu still on bass.

In the rehearsals Mantas just taught the other members chords and the overall idea of the song, he himself is not sure if he did vocals or not.



On the topic of recording these rehearsals, Mantas doesn't know if he or any other member of them did record them, though he surely recorded an acoustic version of “Laanevana” in his home so he wouldn't forget it. Regarding the influences of Pirit, Mantas cites Darkthrone as his biggest, even calling the project Darkthronesque since the first and last song the band made sounded a whole lot like Darkthrone. Other significant influences were Isengard and a bit of Emperor in the nuances of harmony.

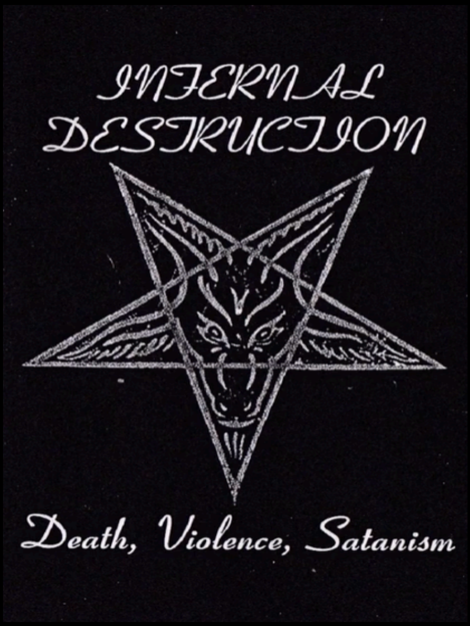
As for the gear of Pirit, Mantas did not care much about it. He has always viewed the will to make music much more important than the quality of the gear and the skills of the musicians. What he got is hands on, that's what he played with. In the Türi rehearsal there was probably a Tama drum kit, Lembetu had a Yamaha bass with a really long neck and Mantas probably played with some Jolana guitar. But as said in the beginning of this segment, Mantas never really cared for top-notch gear and hated the pretentious, overly technical songwriting and sound even his influences of Norwegian BM had.

After 99’ Pirit released only one song, that being “Namenlos Engelhuren”(Nameless Angelwhores) made in 2000, with Gates(Veljo Värava) doing drum programming for it. It ended up on the legendary “Estnische Kriegskameraden”(Estonian War Comrades) compilation.

X

Infernal Destruction

Created in 1996, with a lineup consisting of Sven Reimaa(drums/backing vocals) and Satanizer(Guitars/Vocals/Drums). With this one lineup they released only one demo in 1996 and after a year disbanded, the demo being called “Death, Violence, Satanism”.



And damn this is one nasty demo. The drums have almost no bass to them because of the sound quality, the guitar has a very interesting tone, similar to the classic “chainsaw” tone in extreme metal, but much more broken and ravaging than the usual display of it.

The record reminds me of Hellhammer the most, cause it has those first wave bm riffs and it's as lo-fi as early Hellhammer, but it also goes to the second wave sound too sometimes with the blast beats and continuous tremolo strumming, but the vocals are 100% death metal.

XI
Loits

Credits to Lembetu for info

Founded in 1996 by Lembetu(Ahto-Lembit Lehtmets), although Lembetu had recorded some tracks before 96’ that later turned to Loits tracks, and before Loits the project had names like Mardus and Varrangus.

The idea of Loits and also the band's name, was created by him pretty spontaneously, it all happened one day when Lembetu was with Massacra(Kalev Lubbi), just before the band they were in, Discruciour was ready to rehearse. Then after forming that idea, Lembetu and Massacra recorded a demo track for Loits named “The Return”, with Lembetu on guitars, Massacra on drums.

Though sounding a bit different from the later Loits material, it was still a hint for what was to come. Ravaging, but captivating, catchy guitar riffs that also have some variety to them. The quality is surely raw, but it adds to the atmosphere and power of the riffs.

After that day in 96’ Draconic(Kaido Haavandi) and Massacra helped him with drum programming for new Loits tracks, which were also recorded.

Some records didn't get lost to time, some did and they are now nowhere to be found, even Lembetu sadly doesn't know where they are, and some of those were pretty important recordings of Loits. For example, two songs that are pretty similar to the song “Tulisilma sünd” on the first album. Fun fact: the drums, bass and guitar of those tracks were recorded in Kaido's living room. Then they recorded rehearsals in 1999. when other members like Alan Rahumeel(R.I.P.) and Kaire Nurk(R.I.P.) joined the band, the first on guitars and the latter on synths. Gates(Veljo Värava) also joined at the same time on guitar, and so did Marko Atso on drums.

In 99’ Loits also released their only public recording of the 90s, a promo tape in 1999 named “Tõelised Kuningad” (True Kings). This one track is a pretty big advancement on the Estonian pagan black metal sound. Pure, traditional BM riffs, but then you have these acoustic and also melodic segments, along with lyrics about paganism and nature.

This recording was made for the Lithuanian label Dangus Productions, for their compilation “Dark Fire Dancing IV”, and after that the name of Loits spread pretty quickly to the black metal circles of the world.

After 99’ Loits continued, growing even more stronger, becoming a force to be reckoned with in the realm of black metal.

Loits was of course influenced by the classic Norwegian second wave, but also darker death doom bands like Sadness and Unholy. They were also influenced by black metal bands like In The Woods, Ulver, Fleurety, Ved Buens Ende and Beyond Dawn. Also some indie and neofolk bands, and the local punk bands. Lembetu said that they were maybe even influenced by Metro Luminal, an Estonian post-punk/alternative band. Noting the lyrical influences of Loits, Lembetu said that he really doesn't have any that are related to music; he instead takes inspiration from the tales of Estonian mythos and Estonian Legionnaires, who were related to him.

Regarding the Estonian Legionnaires, to Lembetu it's a topic that just needs to be discussed and is dear to his heart, since they fought for the freedom of the Estonian people, against the communists who in the end imprisoned the Estonian folk for 50 years. Loits was never for the ideology of National Socialism and so were almost all of the Estonian Legionnaires.

Loits live at Põrguwärk III, 20.08.1999, Pärnu.

XII

Manatark

Credits to Draconic for info

Founded in 1996, it originally started as a solo project of Kaido Haavandi(Draconic), although some songs were made before founding the project, and those songs had also more of a death metal sound to them.

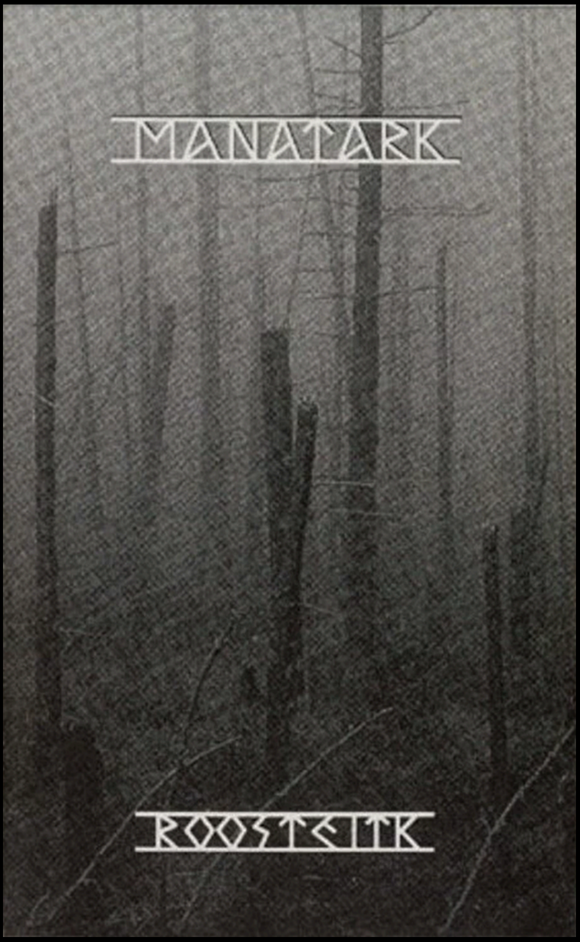
But right away in the same year, he released the rehearsal “Roosteitk”(Lament of Rust). This demo, recorded in the apartment of Kaido, is sadly nowadays not really available for listening, since he released only a few copies, but still some people have the cassette. It was never released publicly, only given to some friends.

But this rehearsal made the foundation for the Dangus Productions released demo in 1998 with the same title.

I'd say this is a pretty similar situation to the “Lunar Poetry” demo Nokrturnal Mortum made, because although classified as a demo, it's much more of an album, and Draconic thinks the same.

Songs are more professionally made and written than your usual demo, it's 48 minutes long and the production is good too.

The record reminds me a lot of Burzum, especially the 3rd and 4th album: long and atmospheric songs, some ambient songs, harsh screams and keyboard segments, and it's all made by one man.



But melodic and folk segments are also here as well and it has a pretty unique, mysterious sound. The record takes you to some old, ancient place like good atmospheric black metal always does.

The demo was recorded also in his apartment, with a 4-track cassette recorder, a Gravis Ultrasound card, guitars, programmed drums and digital synths(both made in the Cakewalk program), with him recording all the instruments into one cassette track after recording them separately. He decided to make the demo on his own, since it was hard finding a drummer and at that time he liked making songs on his own more.

Limitation of this record is not known, but it spread to everywhere Dangus production sold it to and to everywhere people sold/traded it to.

After this demo Draconic decided to add some people into his project, since he wanted to play live, those people were Gates on guitars and Mantas on bass, for drumming they used a backing track. They also recorded some rehearsals and made some videos of their lives, with the first live being in 1999, the 4th of June.

Draconic was heavily influenced by Burzum, Bathory, Immortal and especially Enslaved, but also death metal bands like Death and Pestilence. Also some folk music too, although it wasn't as much of an influence to him as death/black metal, since he wanted to make more dissonant and dark music.

He was enchanted by black metal, it was something new, serious, mystical and fresh, just as for many people in the Estonian metal scene of the 1990s, death and thrash metal had become too casual and bland for him.

He was led into the black metal scene by buying records from stores and not tape trading, which was an uncommon way of getting black metal records in Estonia at that time.

He was in both the Tallinn and Rakvere scene, and bands of that scene influenced him a lot. One of the moments that helped him in deciding to make black metal was listening to the “Must viirastus” demo by Tharapita, which left him amazed and inspired. He learned guitar by trial and error, and drum programming originally through Fasttracker.

Like many members of the Estonian metal scene, the musical rehearsal class schools provided helped Draconic a lot with guitar, since he was in a band at school and at the same time didn't need a huge budget for equipment, which also helped him in discovering heavy metal and the Estonian metal scene. Before Mantark Draconic was also in Carnifex, a death/thrash metal band, with him being the vocalist there.

XIII

Assamalla

Taamalt tõustet toonetarmu

Founded in 1996 by Erki Hirv on vocals, Veigo Peetsalu on bass and Andre Pichen on guitar, but they did not release anything publicly and paused it for 2 years, then returning with a larger lineup. Now Hanno Kiibus plays drums, Meelis Vapper is the second guitarist and Kaarit Kiibus keyboards. After a year of rehearsing, they recorded their first and only release in the 1990s, a demo named “Taamalt Tõustet Toonetarmu”(From Behind, the Stork Rises). Alan Kalm also did backing vocals and produced the record along with Keijo Koppel, who also did the mixing of this demo. The demo was recorded in Stillborn Studios in May 1999.

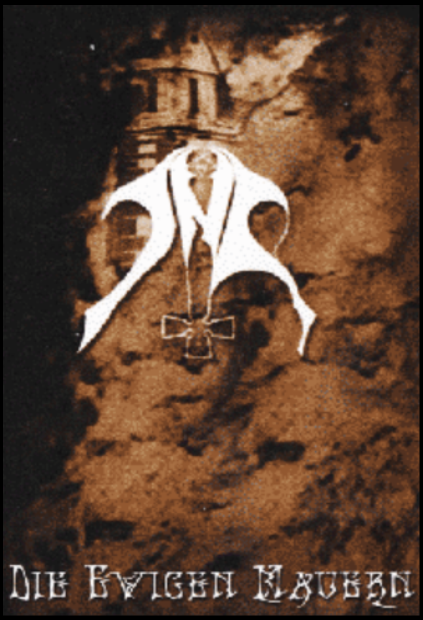
The record is a fantastical work of pagan bm. Music inspired by Estonian folk melodies, Viking era Bathory and heavy metal, but it also has epic keyboards and parts of pure black metal too. The lyrics were inspired by ancient Estonian battles and mythology, also the Estonian national book “Kalevipoeg”. The demo is pretty damn raw, but it doesn't take away the epicness from it at all, honestly it adds to its might. Assamalla also arranged a fest in Pärnu, called “Põrguwärk”, which took place four times.

XIV

D.N.R.

Credits to Eku for info

Founded in Jaunary 1996, the first and for now the only Estonian black grind band. The first lineup was Andrus Tins on bass, Eku on drums and Rites on vocals/guitars. The same year Margus joined the band on guitars. At that time the rehearsal room was the basement of their friend. After a year of the band being formed, they played live in Tallinn in the spring, and Andres left the band shortly after. In 99’ they released two records, one named “Promo MCD 1999” and the other one “Rehearsal 1999”, but sadly i couldn't hear them, since no one is selling them and there isn't a public digital file of them either. They were active until 2006 though, releasing 3 demos and recruiting some new members. Through the 1990s they played live five times, two times in Tallinn, and one time in Väätsa, Pärnu and Põlva. In 1999(released January 2000) they recorded their demo called “Die Ewigen Mauern”(The Eternal



Walls). The record's lineup was Eku, Rites, Margus and Alan(Alan Rahumeel), who joined the band at that time as a bassist. The demo is a really unique release for Estonian black metal. With it being considered a black grind record, the songs are much shorter, under 3 minutes or even 2 minutes and the tape itself has 5 songs, amounting to 9 minutes in length. The blast beats and tremolo picking are still here as they are in traditional black metal, but even more so amplified and faster. The vocals are pure black metal ones too. But there's also a sense of some melody and atmosphere, like the riffs on the track "Bitch Witch" being pretty spread out and kind of Burzum-like. Funnily enough the band members didn't listen to grindcore at all, but had an admiration for fast tempo black metal and wanted to make something different from their Estonian BM peers. After 99' D.N.R still continued but had some lineup changes, making three demos in the 2000s and ultimately disbanding in 2006.

D.N.R live, Põrguwärk III, 20.08.1999, Pärnu.

XV

Tarbatu

Tarbatu

Founded in the autumn of 1996, playing pagan black metal. It all happened when Ghost and Ronk started making music in the dark folk style. Although it was hard to do it since they didn't have a synthesizer nor a computer, but they didn't give up in the least, and the sound of the music got even darker as time went on.

In 97’ Satanizer joined the band, who played in Infernal Destruction, doing guitar work and vocals. Ghost then started to do guitar for the band and Ronk got on drums, with this lineup the band took a more radical turn, both music and lyric wise. The band started writing lyrics with an pagan and warlike theme like the songs “Sõjasarve Hüüd”(Sound of the Battle Horn) and “Ründab Tuurani Armee”(The Turanian Army Attacks). Then in the spring of 98’ Elf(Andres Valk) also joined the band on bass, and became a really active member, writing songs for them and knowing how to play their songs really well. This lineup did their first rehearsal on the 20th November of 1998, in Pärnu.

1999 was a year of strong development and great changes for Tarbatu, where they looked for new band members since Elf had left the band, and the lyrics of the band took a more anger filled turn, also a more broad approach of the Estonian paganism themes they had from the start, but the theme that was the most important and frequent was anti-christianity. Fortunately they found their new bassist, Thonolan from Realm Of Carnivora, though he didn't have a role in the band's songwriting.

Tarbatu didn't release any professional recordings in the 90’s, only the demo named “Kants”(Fortress) in 1997 and a rehearsal in 1999, but some of the music still remains and is available for listening.

The 2 songs I got to hear are “Hävitajad”(Destroyers) and “Risti Vastu”(Against the Cross). The first mentioned track is a really raw burst of completely eviscerating pagan might. Though the riffs are aggressive as all hell, there's also a sense of melody in them, and the song is overall greatly written. The vocals are good too, taking inspiration from the classic BM Bathory vocals. The latter is more of a calmer track, reminding me of Darkthrones song “Quintessence” because of the doomy riffs that play throughout. But the song is still pretty varied, having a few solos and also a hauntingly beautiful dark folk-inspired solo bass section in the beggining.

Members of Tarbatu also hosted the venue “Kruusaauk” in Tartu, which gave Estonian BM bands a chance to perform and meet with fellow comrades. Sadly nowadays nothing remains of that venue.

XVI
Must Missa

Credits to Berg for info

Founded in 1996, the first lineup was Viking(Viktor Villand) on guitars and Kris on drums. Just a bit later Berg(Pertti Sooman) joined them on vocals, they met through borrowing Kris's guitar equipment, and even though they weren't that close, Berg asked if there was a spot in their band for him, and they agreed to him joining the band. In 1999 Nuki also joined, playing bass guitar. The band didn't record any official releases in the 1990s, but were still active. Their first rehearsal is still available on a cassette somewhere, Kris had a really bare-bones drum set and Viking played guitars through a stereo, meanwhile Kris did vocals without a microphone. They usually did rehearsals in the sauna of Kris and recorded with an old tape deck. But for the next 1-2 years they were upgrading the rehearsal place and got themselves a few amps and also a full drum set.

The influences of the band were Norwegian 2nd wave bands Darkthrone, Satyricon, Dimmu Borgir, but they never copied them or anything, they just naturally influenced them since they listened to them a lot. They were also a bit influenced by the music lessons in their school and experimented a bit with synth, in a few rehearsals Kris's classmate played synths but that's all that came of that.

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Tiigi 76a TARTU
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Must Missa live.

A BLAZE IN THE NORTHERN SKY

Left to right: Berg, Kris, Viking.

XVII
Battlestorm

Credits to Andres Kullaste for info

Epic black metal founded in 1997. The first lineup was Ivan(guitar/vocals), Andres(Bass), Vlad(Guitar) and Rain(drums). Before Andres moved from bass to drums, there was an another drummer after Rain, but he was in the band for a very short time. Ivan left the band in 98' or so, with Elf from Ecthalion taking his role as a lead guitarist and Vlad taking over Ivan's vocal duties. The prime influence of the band was Bathory, especially their "Blood, Fire, Death" album. They also did covers of Emperor, Burzum, Darkthrone and Dissection songs.

The gear of Battlestorm was relatively standard, Ivan had a green handmade guitar that was later sold to Andres, and it was used in Pluribus Impar and later Bestia. The band also had a Jolana bass and a yellow, handmade Stratocaster guitar. One guitar had a metal zone pedal and the other one had a handmade distortion one.

During the band's activity they recorded a rehearsal in 99'(recorded in Kopli, Tallinn) and also a demo in 98', which got spread around too, but nowadays has been lost.

The song I got to hear from the band was "Dragonheart" from the 99' rehearsal. It is a really raw, brazen output of black metal, surprisingly hosting a kind of doomy build up in the beginning which then transforms into a epic riff with a pagan influence, and the vocals are done in a clean style, like the ones on Bathory's viking era albums.

Besides that Andres also sent me some example tracks that give the picture of what the rest of Battlestorm's songs sound like. They were recorded much later than the period when the band was active, with programmed drums and no vocals, but still give a good sense of what music the band was playing.

The songs offer lots of greatly written riffs with numerous variations, the songs have the typical bm song length, 4-5 minutes, but host a selection of melodies. From the standard traditional bm riffs to the doomier and pagan ones influenced by Bathory's later material, but the essence is still raw and wild.

Battlestorm, Walpurgis Night 98'. From left to right: Rain, Vlad, Ivan and Andres.

XVIII

Grom

Credits to Vaal Nechrist for info

Founded in the autumn of 1997 by Vaal Nehrist(Guitars, Vocals). In that same year he recruited Ljonja to play drums, and a bit later but in the same year Dimon(ex-Deilegium) also joined on bass, and after that the 90s Grom lineup was formed.

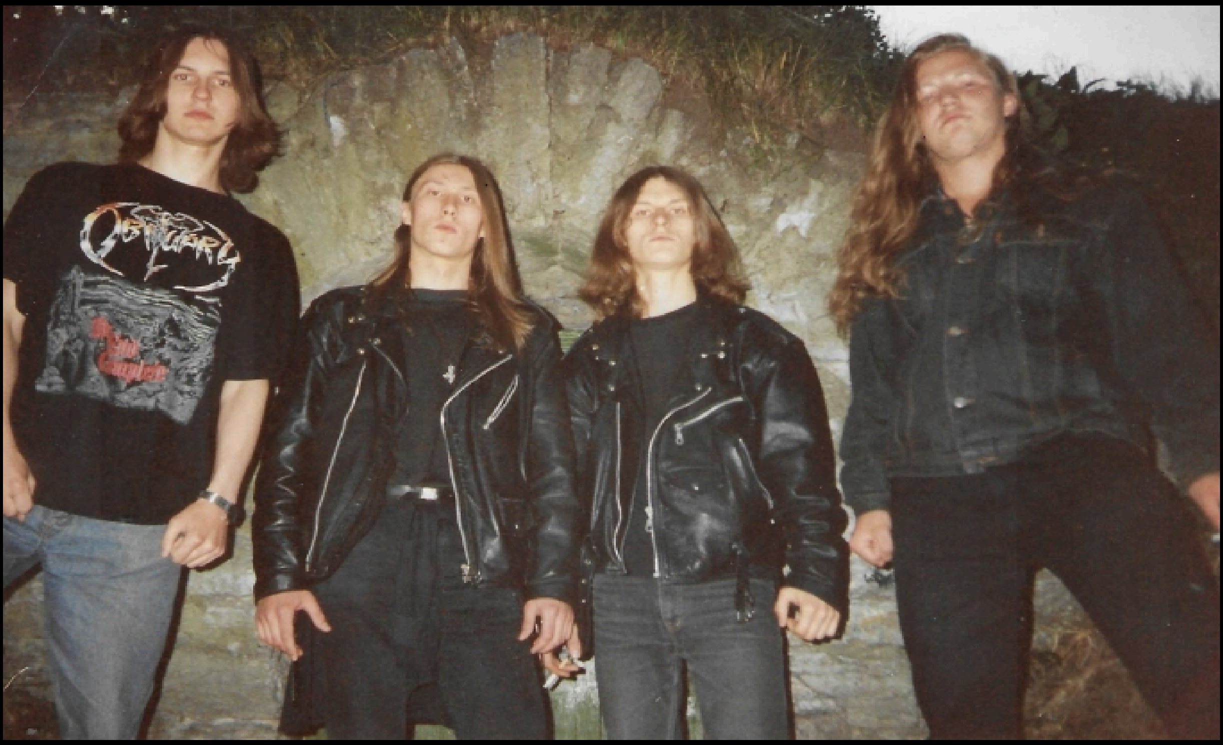
At first, Grom was influenced by the early black metal of Darkthrone and the first album of Immortal.

Sadly, there are no known records left from that time, or at least the band members of Grom are unaware of them. But they wrote songs and rehearsed, and from those songs they recorded their demo in 2002.

Grom didn't perform live in the 90s, since the band members saw it as a studio project and they had no intentions of it being a live band, but they changed their mind and did their first gig in 2001, on the 30th of March.

At that time Grom also didn't have a rehearsal room, so they just rented studio time when it was possible and affordable for them. Concerning the 90s gear of Grom, Vaal said that at the band's rehearsal rooms there was usually a very random selection of equipment, the sound quality of it ranging from mediocre to bad. The amps were mostly solid-state. All the equipment for playing metal, even the entry-level gear was expensive compared to the incomes of the members. Back then if you had an axe guitar (of some obscure brand or crafted by a local luthier) along with a distortion pedal and a small combo amp you were really well off. Vaal himself had a homemade fish-tailed guitar (which he bought from Konstantin Viking of Black Death, an underground Estonian metal band of the 90s) and an Ibanez stomp-box style pedal.

Grom continued after the 90s and is still active, performing live. I would recommend seeing them if you have the chance, as in my opinion their performance at the 2024 Howls of Winter was one the best sets of the festival.



Grom. Left to right: Ivan(Not a Grom member but a member of Battlestorm), Dimon, Ljonja, Vaal.

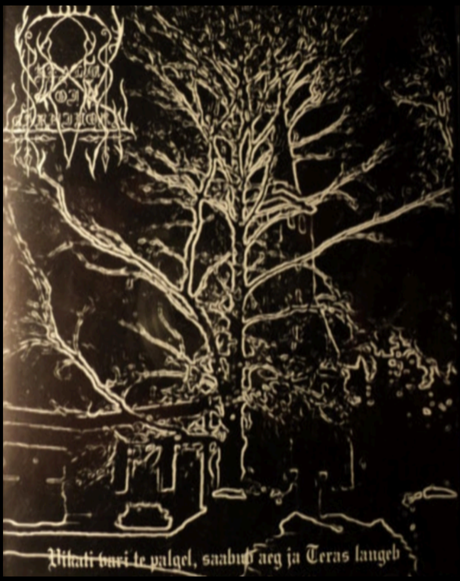
XIX
Realm of Carnivora

Credits to Martin Laine for info

Founded in the autumn of 1998 by Thonolan Bestia(Martin Laine), Pimedus(Henri Kozlov) and Abathon. They started right away releasing music, releasing their first demo named “DEMO(N) 98” already at the end of 1998.
The musicians of this demo were Thonolan Bestia on drums/acoustic guitar on track 1, Pimedus on vocals, Abathon on guitars/synths and fx on the first track. No bass guitar was used. Gorgthona(Sten Paal) joined the band as a guitarist around that time as well, but Martin doesn't remember if he was in the band during this demo recording. The demo was recorded with a cassette recorder, and the intro was recorded in the radio room Johannes Käisi named school of Põlva, while the other three tracks in the rehearsal room of the same school. Only a few copies of the demo were made.

Sadly I couldn't find a way to listen to this demo, but it has the same songs as the album that was released a year after, but they were re-recorded for that record because of the poor sound quality, and a new version of the intro was also recorded for the debut album.

And that album was released in September 1999, recorded in Tallinn, Stillborn Studios with Keljo Koppel in August 1999 and called “Vikati vari te palgel, saabub aeg ja teras langeb… Vengeance Shall Come!!!”. 100 copies on CD-R were made of this album and it was released independently.


Vikati vari te palgel, saabub aeg ja Teras langeb

This record's lineup is the same as the one the demo had, but now Gorgthona is surely playing in the band and the drums were programmed this time, since Stillborn Studios didn't have the option to record live drums at that time.

The record is full of rawness and energy, but it also captures a lot of different black metal styles. From pure black metal, to melodic, to atmospheric and sometimes some symphonic elements can be heard too.

Fun fact, the album won the best Estonian metal album of 1999 award in the Raadio 2 show “Metallion”.

Besides those two records no other official records were made, only some rehearsals and live recordings(at the 1999 Võru Kandle gig, synths were played by Taavi Ristimäe) have been recorded, but those recordings are nowadays hard to find since only a few people have them on VHS/cassette.

The band had many influences, Thonolan was influenced by rock bands he found in his mothers record collection like Queen and G.G.G/Magnetic from Estonia, also the Estonian rock band Ruja and Estonian punk band J.M.K.E to grunge and metal he listened to on MTV, to black metal records like the “Kui varjud põlevad” demo from Tharapita(which was one of his first experiences with black metal), also some records from Burzum and Darkthrone.

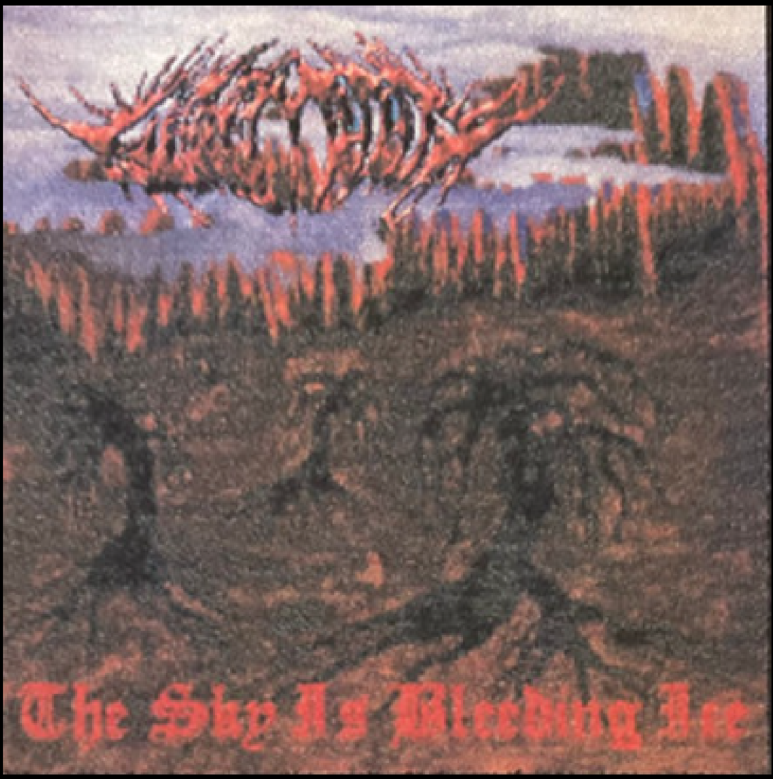
Abathon was influenced by classic heavy metal and hard rock like King Diamond and Judas Priest, and that Tharapita demo was also one of his earliest experiences with black metal and an influence of his too. It should be noted that Thonolan and Abathon were in a groove/death metal band named Morbia before Realm of Carnivora. Gorgthona was in a punk band called Blunder before joining the band. His influences aren't clearly known, but they probably were the popular BM bands of that time like Marduk, Dimmu Borgir, Cradle of Filth, etc. Pimedus was influenced by pretty much the same stuff as the other members, but he at the start was more into doom metal, bands like Decoryah, older Anathema and My Dying Bride. His primary BM influences were “Battles of The North” by Immortal and early Satyricon. He also was influenced by Sepultura, Korn and Tool, the latter two were bands that all the band members listened to. Thonolan noted that they got most of their music from the MTV show Headbangers Ball, especially liking the Into The Pit segment, discovering bands like Dark Funeral, Hypocrisy and Grave from there.

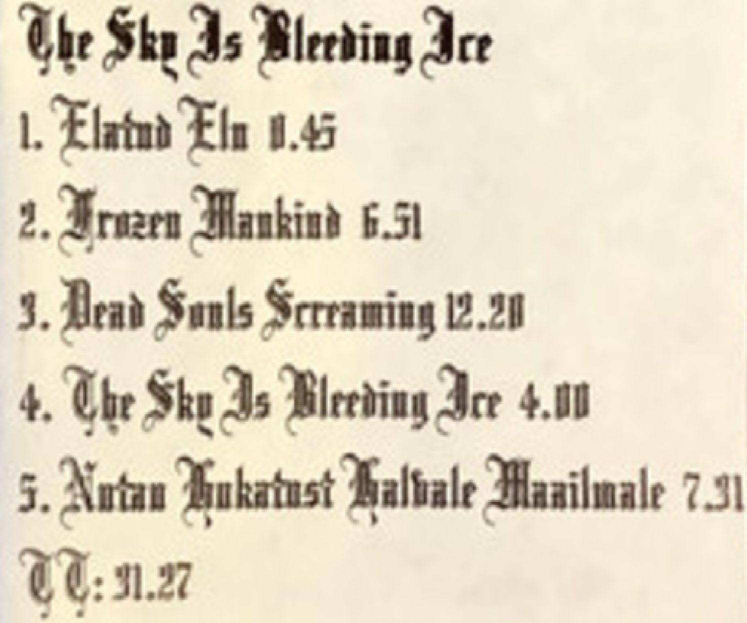
XX

Wintermoon

Credits to Lunastaja for info

Founded in 1998 by Lord Mortius, as a synth project, or as some call it nowadays, a dungeon synth project. He recorded two demos in that same year, named “Northengates” and “793-Seafog”, both of which sadly are now probably nowhere to be found. Then Mortius got acquainted with Lunastaja, funnily through him being the boyfriend of his sister. After meeting each other, Mortius and Lunastaja decided to play together in the band, and move it into a black metal direction. Soon after that, they recorded the demo “The Sky is Bleeding Ice”.


The Sky Is Bleeding Ice



The Sky Is Bleeding Ice
1. Elatud Elu 0.45
2. Frozen Mankind 6.51
3. Dead Souls Screaming 12.20
4. The Sky Is Bleeding Ice 4.00
5. Nutan Hukatust Halvale Maailmale 7.31
TT: 31.27

Composed of five tracks, it is a record that is really unique in black metal. Although there are blast beats and trebly guitars, they are often played in a really harsh, dissonant way and are heavily overlaid by demented and haunting synths.

Although Burzum’s influence can surely be heard, the synths and songwriting make this record something else that is far away even from Burzum.

The record also has some pure folk or ambient segments, and even those are experimental and far away from the conventional sound of these genres. Overall, a record that bends traditional black metal into something even more haunting, dissonant and atmospheric.

After 1999 the band still stayed together, and recruited Reimo for guitars, vocals and synth programming and also a drummer joined them. They did a rehearsal and a one song demo titled “War Fog”, but after that Lunastaja and Mortius left the band, while Reimo continued it on a bit, making two records, and then ending the project completely.

XXI
Morigan

Started playing black metal in 1998, and performed at Noor Rock in 1999. Sadly none of their pre-2000s releases are available to me. But Ax(Not to be confused with Aivar Vood who has the same synonym) was on drums from 1998 to 2001, nA.T was on guitars, and Torso was on keyboard from 1999-2000. They released a demo in 1999, named “Among the Eternal Fire”, but that's all the info I found. The band stopped in 2003 after some members had already left, but later they reformed to play in the death/thrash metal style.

XXII

Sorts

Credits to Veljo Värava for info

Founded in 1998 by Gates(Veljo Värava) as a continuation of his previous band, The Grey Calamity. The band started with him playing drums, Ank from Tharapita on guitar and vocals, and Benton(Marek Mihailov) on bass. With that lineup they did a few rehearsals from 98 to 99'.

Sadly Sorts didn't record anything in the 90s, but they did release the single "Demons on The Ride" in 2000, though after that remained inactive until the year 2010, then it became mostly a project of Veljo and Mantas.

XXIII

Pluribus Impar

Pluribus Impar

Credits to Andres Kullaste and Kristo Klausson for info

Depressive black/doom metal founded in 1998. Founded by Pyhak(vocals) and Riina(vocals). They were originally called Sacrilegium, but changed the name after a couple of months. Right after founding the band they got a guitarist. Andres and Kristo(slay) also oversaw the band, though Andres wasnt that active with the band at that time, since the rehearsals were quite mediocre. But when slay volunteered to play guitar for them, the result got better and Andres started being more active in the band. According to Andres, there was also a drummer during that era of the band, who left right before Andres took over drums completely.

Now reformed as Pluribus Impar, they got to recording. Doing at least two recordings at the Helikassetitehas in Tallinn, with Elf from Ecthalion doing lead guitars and Zed doing bass on some rehearsals. The band also had two other bass players in 99’: Arha(Maarja) who played with them at Põrguwärk III and Maria, the bass player of Ecthalion at that time who played bass for Pluribus Impar at their Kruusaauk live. Zed was in Pluribus Impar after Maria left the band.

They also did other recordings in Helikassetitehas, all of these recordings forming the “Üksinduse Kuningriiki…” (Into the Kingdom of Loneliness…) demo which was released in 2000, but recorded both in 99’ and 2000 through various sessions. Lineup of this demo was slay(guitar on tracks 1-7, lyrics on tracks 1-3, 5-7), Andres(drums), Pyhak(vocals, lyrics on tracks 4-5), Zed(bass) and Elf(lead guitars, tracks 6-7).

The record is a really well done and diverse soundscape, hosting memorable riffs in the thrashy, doomy and depressive BM vein. The lyrics of the record are also noteworthy and help in creating the morose landscape.

Pluribus Impar

I recommend this demo to all the people who view Depressive Black Metal as redundant(me included haha), since this demo does that sound the right way and is a really worthwhile and underrated release. About the gear of the band and Helikassetitehas, they used the local cassette recorder, probably a Technics one. The guitar of Andres was handmade and a custom one, made by Udaloff in the beginning of the 90s, the same guitar was also used by a member of Rattler.

Pluribus Impar made their live debut in Põrguvärk III in 99’, in the same year they also performed at the Bremen yard and at Kruusaauk(Khattra) in Tartu, 3rd december.

The band had various influences. Andres for example listened to Darkthrone, Immortal, Satyricon and Absu.

Kristo was really enchanted by Tiamat(especially their "Clouds" record that he listened to months on end) and Metro Luminal, those two bands really influenced him to play in a more melancholic way, along with other depressive metal and goth rock bands he listened to at that time. Besides these bands Kristo also had the old records of Metallica, the "Chaos AD" record of Sepultura and Slayer's "Seasons in the Abyss" in his playlist, along with Alice Cooper's 1986-91 albums. Bands all the members liked were Tharaphita, Ignorabimus, Katatonia and Anathema.

Pluribus Impar

Pluribus Impar, live at Põrguwärk III. Left to right: slay, Andres, Pyhak and Arha.

Back: Andres, Slay, Arha. Front: Pyhak

XXIV

Ohvrikivi

Credits to Berg for info

Black viking metal founded in 1998. The lineup was and still is only Berg on every instrument you hear on the records. In the 2 years when it was active in the 1990s he used it as a solo project to get his ideas out and for creating the songs of his other band, Must Missa. Ohvrikivi was of course influenced by the classic Norwegian black metal bands, but a notable thing is that he was influenced by Isengard in this project. Not by the sound, but more so by how Fenriz ran the project, recording it by himself and the atmosphere of the project. Sadly Ohvrikivi didn't release any music officially in the 1990s, but Berg was active in it and it laid the foundation for the later Ohvrikivi releases.

Berg found metal in 1991-1992, at the start being into death metal. His friend recorded cassettes, mostly releases of bands like Cannibal Corpse, Deicide, Body Count, and some thrash metal records too. One day he told him that somebody had given him a Malaysian-made pirated copy of the first Burzum album, but to him it was too extreme, so he sold it to him. Berg really liked it from the first listen and it was a new experience for him. An example of how one can and do a project that many people don't get into.

Berg was an outsider in the school he went to and kept mostly to himself, most people there did listen to metal and punk, but not black metal so the sound of Burzum clicked with him and he related to it, since Burzum was also an outsider in the metal scene, just like he was at school. It connected to his personality and feelings better than other metal records he had heard. Berg also noted that at that time it was much harder to get info of bands, for example it took him at least 2-3 years to know that Varg was in prison.

As I said before, there weren't any Ohvrikivi releases in the 1990s, but already in 2000 he released the first demo named “Forgotten Screams”.

Berg.

XXV

Meinardus

Credits to Ants Lill and Andres Lõhmus(Arombard) for info

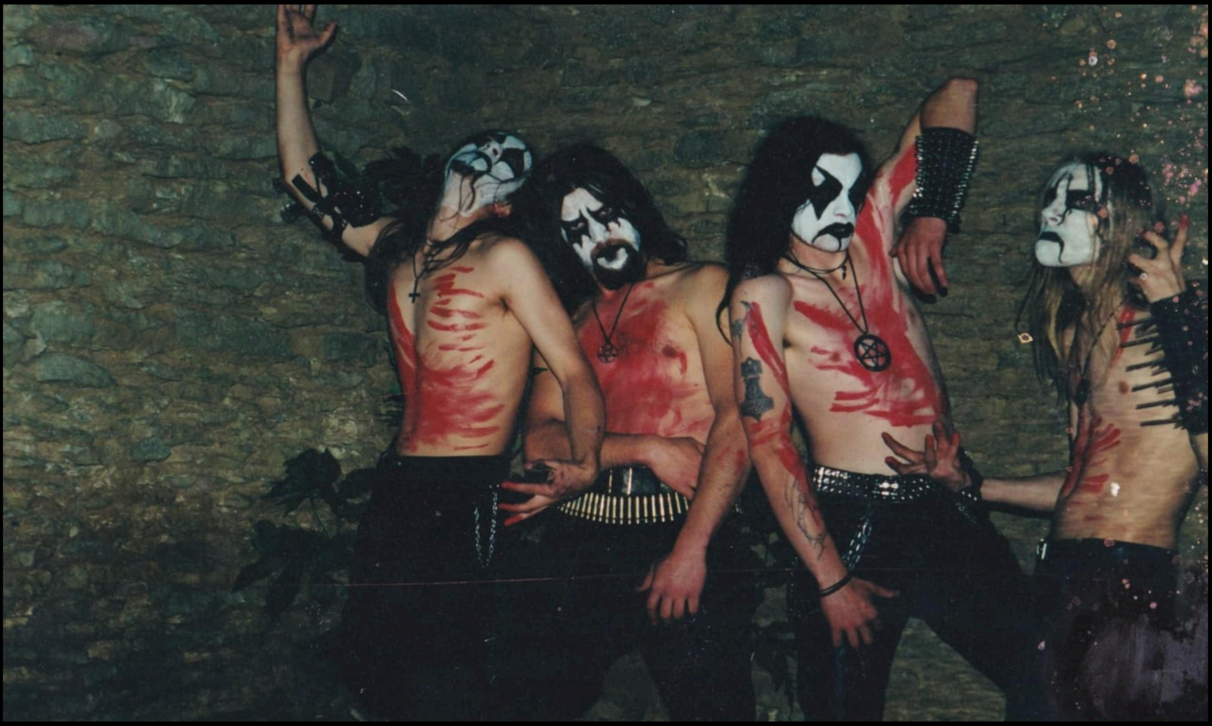
Founded in the end of 1998, playing raw, straightforward old school black metal. The founding members were Enthorn and Arombard on guitars, and then Thyposes(vocals/bass), Crom(drums) and I. Marras aka Cannibal(keyboards/vocals) joined the band as well. After the band had fully formed they started rehearsing, creating material, and then doing live gigs, doing seven in 1999. On the 9th March performing at Roodevälja Rock(Rakvere), on the 6th April at Wesenberg Rock(Rakvere), on the 25th June in Viljandi, on the 10th August at Põrguwärk 3(Pärnu, Waldhof music factory), on the 30th October at Metal Fest 4(Võru, House of Culture), and on the 26th December at Green Christmas(Rakvere, Theatre).
99' was also the year where they made their first demo tape, "Ohvrid nende altaril"(Offerings On Their Grave), with the cover art being their logo on a plain black background.
The demo is outstanding for a first one, packing a tough and raw punch. Though it is a rehearsal demo, it is one the level of most regular BM demos. The riffs and drums ravish the listener,

but are catchy as hell too, and also switch up pretty frequently. Some melodic riff sections and even some keyboard parts are present on this demo, but most of the record is in the traditional and blistering style of early Norwegian BM. The vocals remind a lot of Nocturnal Culto’s ones in the first three Darkthrone BM style records, really well done. Though the demo isn't something that reinvents the wheel, it's a worthwhile listen to this day, if you get your hands on one of the few copies somehow or just listen to it through the net.

Besides this demo there were also some rehearsals and lives that were recorded, and Andres thinks that some songs which were not on the demo were recorded as well, though still in rehearsal quality. Meinardus additionally did a cover of a Dark Funeral song and Tortmentor’s “Elizabeth Bathory”, performing the latter live too. But still, nothing besides “Ohvrid Nende Altaril” was released officially in 99’.

For all of the Meinardus members of the 90s, black metal was a pretty new style to them and it was surely the music they listened to the most. The favorite and most influential bands though for Andres and also for the other members too mostly were My Dying Bride, Anathema, Emperor, Dark Funeral, Mayhem, Satyricon, Opeth, early Cradle of Filth, Hecate Enthroned and Morbid Angel.

Meinardus continued after the 90’s, releasing two albums and a single, also recording a demo named “Servant Of the Unholy”, though it was never released. The band was almost on the verge of disbanding after the tragic death of Enthorn in 2002, but decided the band must go on. Sadly, after 2004 Meinardus was rendered inactive.



Meinardus sometime in between the years of 98/99. From left to right: Crom, Enthorn, Cannibal, Thyposes.

XXVI

Scavenger

Credits to Stig Lindberg for info

Black/death/thrash metal forged in 1999, with their name coming from the Death song “Scavenger Of Human Sorrow”. That very year the members Stig(guitar/vocals), Omar(drums), Kari(guitar) and Mairold(bass/vocals) got to work right away, releasing a rehearsal demo in May, named “Rising Of The Black Spirit, featuring three songs:

1. Sorcerer's Bastion
2. Under The Shadow Of The Black Spirit
3. Labyrinth

Then, in September they also did a rehearsal demo which had the same songs as the first demo(except Sorcerer’s Bastion), but three more were also played: “Devil Night Forever”, “Vampire Hunter” and “Prevail Of The Evil”.

The gear of Scavenger was for Stig at the start some model of a Fender guitar that he traded for a Washburn one and also a Zoom 505 pedal. Mairold had a Jolana Iris bass and from Stig’s memory, Kari probably had a Yamaha guitar. Omar’s drums were a Tama set, a relatively inexpensive model of them.

Concerning Scavenger's influences of that time, Stig was surely under the spell of Burzum and Emperor around that time, and the other members listened to bands like King Diamond, Death, Entombed etc.
Scavenger did not perform live in 99', but they stepped first on stage on the 29th March of 2000 at the Khattra club in Tartu along with D.N.R., Suppuration(EST) and Must Missa.
After 99' Scavenger released two more demos, but put an end to the band's original name in 2002, since there were a lot of bands with the same name as them. So they reformed the band as Symbolic State with the same members, and reformed the sound of the band's music as well, with the band then hosting an old school death metal sound. Symbolic State was active until 2007, releasing an album, a promo tape and also a live recording throughout its activity. A new member also joined Symbolic State after they had done their first album, Spunk(Alar Arna) on vocals.

Scavenger. From left to right: Kari, Mairold, Stig, Omar.

XXVII

Irdhing

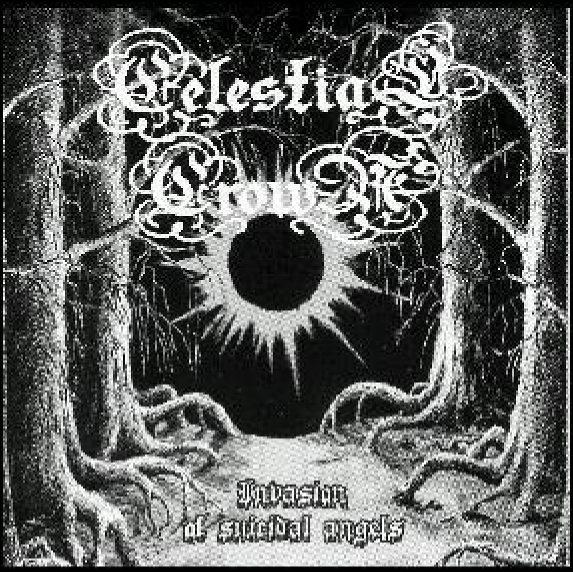
Pagan black/folk/industrial metal founded in the autumn of 1999, and in the beginning didn't have a name. The founding members were Dr. Peerox on bass, Imp on guitars, Heiki on drums and Rain vocals. Since the band was founded really late in 99', they didn't get to release much if any material, but still they are worth mentioning in this book.

XXVIII

Celestial Crown

Credits to Aleksander Shelepekin and Denis Volynkin for info

Black/doom/gothic metal founded in the autumn of 1999. Started with a lineup of Denis Volynkin on vocals, Aleksander Shelepenenkin on guitars, doing all of the songwriting too. Their first recording of 99' was done in October, a demo called "Invasion of Suicidal Angels". A really unique output in the Estonian BM scene, melodic riffs and keyboards, some sections of clean vocals but still has a lot of traditional BM rawness and also elements of doom metal. Professionally executed and the record keeps your interest throughout. Funnily enough this record reminds me a lot of the first In Flames full-length, "Lunar Strain", especially the riffs of that album.



An underrated demo people interested in the more gothic/melodic side of black metal should check out!

Besides the demo there are still many ideas for lyrics and songs that the band wrote in 99', and some of them are even now being used for the bands new music. Although they were not connected between each other, so the names of these songs were usually "Song 1", "Song 5" etc.

The gear they used at that time were Ibanez guitars, a Marshal amp and a Zoom 3030 pedal. They used programmed drums, which were done through an Estonian program called Soundclub and later dubbed through the microphone.

In 99' the band didn't have many metal centered musical influences, cause they were new to that music, before the members played in a punk band. But the main influences were Anathema(UK), My Dying Bride and Cradle of Filth.

After the 90s Celestial Crown remained active, releasing many albums and they're still active to this day.

XXIX

Vondvort

Credits to Pagansorts(Priit Salusoo) for info

Founded in 1999 by Pagansorts, he wanted to make dark and evil black metal solely in the vein of Bathory and Judas Iscariot, but at that time didn’t have the skills to do it, but he was getting there. In the very year of 1999 he started to learn the instruments needed for the project - mainly drums and guitar but also bass. At the start he didn’t have a place to rehearse, but a bit later shared one with a punk band. But his skills still weren’t mastered enough to create music by himself in 1999. But later in 2000 other members joined the band, first Andres aka Skelking, then Brymyth and Lord Askrad, and in 2001 Vondvort recorded their releases, with the first release being based on the ideas Pagansorts had in 1999, a raw quality rehearsal tape named “Lost Souls of Shathür”. The tape was distributed pretty freely and independently, people could ask the band to record or copy the tape.

Lost Souls Of Shathûr

Vondvort - “Lost Souls of Shathür” cassette.

XXX

Moonlight Descends

Credits to Eku(Egert Allikas) for info

Melodic Black Metal founded in 1999, with Saku on keyboards, Eku on vocals, Raivo and Tan on guitars. There were problems with finding a drummer and bassist, but eventually they found Silver(Siku) to play bass for them and Kris from Must Missa joined the band as a drummer. Fun fact, the band didn't have a name at the start, but then chose the name Moonlight Descends.
In 99' they only recorded some rehearsals with a cassette recorder, but sadly nowadays they are nowhere to be found.
Though Eku has forgotten a lot about the gear of Moonlight Descends since a lot of time has passed since 99', he does remember that in the beginning, that one of the guitars was self-built, but pretty quickly the guitarists bought Ibanez guitars along with Metal Zone MT2 pedals, and in the later rehearsals of Moonlight Descends they had much more extensive gear.
The band was influenced by the BM bands like Mayhem, Dimmu Borgir, Darkthrone, Emperor, Enslaved, Immortal, Dark Funeral and various others.
Moonlight Descends stayed active until 2003, and released an untitled demo in 2001, though they had some issues due to conscription of the members, which in the end made the band stop making music under the style of black metal since after returning to the studio it wasn't their cup of tea anymore, and

they reunited(except Siku) as Third Descent, playing War Black Metal.

As an extra(because it was recorded 2001 for the demo of the same year), I'd like to talk about the song “In the Halls of Ancient Castle” which I had a chance to listen to through Youtube. It is a really good track that I urge people to check out. They keyboard work is very fucking well done and extensive, along with the melodic guitar riffs and Nocturno Culto-like vocals. Honestly one of the best songs i've heard in Estonian BM, though surely on the lighter, symphonic/meloblack side of it.

moonlight descends
moonlight descends

Final word

Hails to everyone who read this book and the people that helped me with it, from my english teacher Matthijs Quajitaal who was the instructor of the academical side of my work, to the people like Veiko Rebane, Andres Volly and Ants Lill who also helped me with discovering 90s bands I could not have found myself and gave info of the other bands of this book. I'd like to also give a big thank you to Robert and Laura Kõrvits for reviewing the book before it was published.

I am really thankful to all of the people who I had the chance to interview, since without them this book would be much shorter and it would have as much to offer as the band pages on Metallum.

The Estonian BM of the 90s is an important topic that needs to be archived, since it sparked a lot of great, influential bands and to this day is an important detail in the sphere of Estonian culture, and hell even the world's culture. Giving the info a chance to be released physically and digitally, helps to keep the history in a safe place that won't disappear quickly, as was the case with numerous band websites and estonianmetal.com, which are now only able to seen through Waybackmachine, which also has the chance to be removed someday.

Veiko Rebane: “The arrival of the second wave of Black Metal brought a breath of fresh air to the underground metal community.
Death Metal had run its course and Black Metal brought much needed artistic freedom, but as the years went on it was clear that Black Metal was becoming even more entangled in rules and becoming even more orthodox than Death Metal. As the vocalist of The Grey Calamity I can say that I embraced the artistic freedom of Black Metal with open arms and our approach was to create it inwards, our attitude was that our inner microcosm needed Black Metal and Black Metal needed our souls to expand inward. We never did a money shot, we never sold out because our souls were too dark for that market.”